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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is four-fold. First, to determine the current status of program offerings for the aging in selected institutions of higher education. Second, to ascertain if any programs designed to train personnel to work with the aging are currently being offered. Third, to determine what plans for future programs were being made by institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and fourth, to determine what are the existing attitudes and priorities of those institutions with regard to such programs. Employing an open-end, closed-form survey questionnaire mailed to all institutions in the neighboring states of West Virginia and Tennessee, it was found that, for the most part, little either in the way of currently offered programs or plans for future offerings is taking place. This finding was contradictory to the self-reported attitudes of the need for such programs surveyed. However, where programs were being offered, services were being rendered, or attitudes toward the extension of education of the elderly to a larger segment of the aging population were reported, it appeared that the community colleges were more aware of the needs and more willing to bear a share of the responsibility for the meeting in comparison to the four-year college and universities. (Author)

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THE PERCEIVED ROLE OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SERVING THE AGING

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State University

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- N. Alan Sheppard

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was four-fold. First, to determine the current status of program offerings for the aging in selected institutions of higher education. Second, to ascertain what, if any, programs for the aging are designed to train personnel to work with the aging were currently being offered. Third, to determine what plans for future programs were being made by institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and fourth, to determine what are the existing attitudes and priorities of those institutions with regard to such programs.

Employing an open-end, closed-form survey questionnaire mailed to all institutions of higher education in Virginia and to a representative sample of such institutions in the neighboring states of West Virginia and Tennessee, it was found that, for the most part, little either in the way of currently offered programs or plans for future offerings is taking place. This finding was contradictory to the self-reported attitudes toward the need for such programs surveyed. Where, however, programs were being offered, services were being rendered, or attitudes toward the extension of education of the elderly to a larger segment of the aging population were reported, it appeared that the Community Colleges were more aware of the needs and more willing to bear a share of the responsibility for the meeting of such needs in comparison to the four-year colleges and/or universities.

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

One of the fastest growing population groups in Virginia is the group composed of those persons aged 60 and over. These older Americans have increased in number by more than thirty percent in the last decade, and, in 1971 totaled over 525,000 for Virginia alone (U.S. Bureau of the Census Report, 1971). Similar increases in both the numbers and proportion of older persons in the population are occuring throughout the United States, posing hitherto unforeseen problems to the public at large, and to educational institutions in particular. Unfortunately, neither the knowledge and understanding of the problems of, nor the capacity to provide the multidimensional services which these numbers of older persons need has grown to keep pace with the increase in population. Service personnel, largely trained to deal with the problems of youth, find themselves at a professional disadvantage when faced with the need for the knowledge and skills of the field of gerontology. It has been estimated that at present there is a need for training approximately 1000 persons to deal with the broad spectrum of projects related to aging in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and that by 1978 the number of persons needing some staff in-service training is expected to approach 3000 (Montgomery, 1973).

There is then, an urgent need for the inclusion in the offerings of institutions of higher education of courses dealing with the needs

and potentials of the aging population, both through the vehicle of the regular curriculum, and by way of short courses, seminars, workshops, in-service training, and continuing education efforts.

Objectives

The primary objectives of this study were (1) to determine whether programs related to the field of aging are currently being offered by institutions of higher education; (2) to determine what plans are being made for the offering of such programs within the forseeable future; and (3) to learn what are the attitudes toward education about and for the aging population presently held by the institutions in question.

Statement of the Problem

The central concerns stated in question form were as follows: What are our colleges and universities doing now to serve the needs of the increasing numbers of the aging population? What plans are being made to meet those needs in the future? What attitudes prevail regarding the role of colleges and universities in the serving of the needs of the elderly? What priorities are placed by the institutions on serving that particular segment of society represented by the aging population?

It was expected that some answers to these questions will be useful to the educational community, to governmental agencies, and to the public at large as it comes to grips with the necessity of dealing with the increasingly complex problem of the role of the aging in society.

Basic Assumptions

The following assumptions were based upon logical reasoning and empirical evidence:

1. It was assumed that any educational institution, whether public or private, being so richly endowed with finances, facilities

and talent has a heavy responsibility to aid society in finding solutions to problems in which education can be viewed as a key factor.

2. It was further assumed that the respondents were in a position to be aware of the current status of and future plans for work involving the aging in their respective institutions. It was, of course, realized that the respondents were reflecting only a segment of the institutions involved and could not be expected to be representative of the entire college or university community.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined to provide clarification and the prevention of conceptual misunderstanding:

Aging: refers in this study to persons 65 years of age and older; also was used synonymously with "elderly", "older persons" and "the aged".

Attitudes: refers in this investigation to a predisposition to act toward an object in a favorable or unfavorable way.

Related Research

In recent years there has been a sharp increase in the attention paid to the problem of aging in society. The White House Conference in 1961 focused nationwide attention on the situation of a large group of persons frequently referred to as "Senior Citizens"; the Older Americans Act became law in 1965 and established a federal Administration on Aging. There has been increasing national awareness that aging persons have special problems and needs and that the numbers of aging have reached a magnitude which demands notice.

In the popular literature articles dealing with the experience of retirement (Alberts, 1974; Fallon, 1973) and the aging process (Hoffman, 1974; Freeman, 1973; Puner, 1974), have appeared in increasing numbers.

Both in the popular and in the professional literature there has been in evidence a focusing upon the problem of education for and about

the aging. Articles have appeared describing the experience of the older person returning to school (Lowe, 1974; Mason, 1974; Auer, 1973), and which focus on the ability of adults to learn (Hultsch, 1974; Baltes and Schaie, 1974).

Kauffman has published a report of the performance of the Educare program at the University of Kentucky which included 56 men and 127 women over 65 (Kauffman, 1969). The entire Summer 1974 issue of the JOURNAL OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN EDUCATION was devoted to the topic of "Lifelong Learning".

Assessment of needs in the field of gerontology identified the major need in the field of aging to be educational programs for those working or planning to work with the aging (Wray, 1970). Work at the University of Denver was conducted to expand services to the aging and sensitize students to the role and function of older persons in a changing social structure (Friedelson, 1970). The ACCORD Project in Onondaga County, New York, suggests a participative approach to education for aging which deals with what the author terms the urgent task of programming for senior citizens (Easter, 1974).

The bulk of the reporting on programs for the aging in educational institutions has come from the community colleges. Groups like the senior citizens pressing for attention are challenging the traditional attitudes and roles of the two-year college. Increasingly the junior college and the community college seem to be expanding to meet their emerging mission of serving all persons seeking educational opportunities (Helling, 1972). The Black Hawk Community College in the Quad-City area of Illinois has involved senior citizens in creative programs of life

enrichment. The program, staffed wherever possible by persons over 60 is seen as an effort to help the aging population of the area retain or regain their "rightful position in the mainstream of life" (Pattison, 1973). Pilot projects have been set up in Kentucky Community Colleges dealing with continuing education for older adults (Kauffman, 1967). Multi-Purpose Senior Centers within Community College settings are reported from such diverse locations as Hawaii and the State of Washington (Amor, 1973; Sarvis, 1973). In Florida the discovery that more than 10 percent of the population of Polk County were retirees with unmet educational needs led to the implementation of a project under the Higher Education Act of 1965 for the expressed purpose of meeting such needs (Bradley, 1967). In Virginia, at Mountain Empire Community College attempts to involve the older citizens of the area in an effort to preserve the local mountain folk heritage have been reported (Turnage and Moore, 1973). The Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa has taken the lead in planning for the elderly by assuming the role of the local Area Agency on Aging. Kirkwood Community College, after a survey, discovered that the majority of older persons within their area were desirous of continuing their contacts with and contributions to the community. The college provided organizational and consultant functions to provide services for the over-60 population within the area (Feller, 1973).

Consideration of the needs of elderly persons and possible educational programs to meet those needs has received attention in the community colleges (Korim, 1973; Watson, 1973). However, of the total of 1137 community and junior colleges involved in a survey, only two colleges

operated multi-purpose senior centers, 103 offered a comprehensive array of services to older Americans, and 322 provided some sort of service to senior adults (Maust, 1973).

In considering the area of training professionals and para-professionals to work with the aging, a survey conducted by the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges revealed that, as of June 1973, there was only 27 institutions offering curricula specifically designed to prepare students to work with the elderly. Some 389 colleges also offer courses with some emphasis on aging in areas such as recreational leadership and mental health; another 112 of the two-year colleges indicated plans to implement some sort of aging program in the near future (American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, 1973).

A quite novel suggestion has been put forth for a G I Bill for the aged and aging to help combat what is termed "occupational, familial, and psychic and intellectual obsolesence (Goldman, 1970).

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

A survey questionnaire was designed to determine the current status of programs related to the aging, plans for such programs in the future, and attitudes toward education of and for the elderly at the institutions involved (See Appendix B). A Cover letter described the purposes of the project (See Appendix A), relative to the present functioning of the institutions. Respondents were asked to identify current programs within and outside the regular curricula of the institutions and to describe for whom these programs were intended, if, indeed, any existed. To determine the attitude of the institution toward increasing th emphasis on education for aging and the aging, items were included which were intended to explore the respondents attitudes toward broadening the scope of such activities within the institutions. In addition, respondents in Virginia alone were asked to identify the current enrollment of students in their institutions who were over 65, stating whether these students were enrolled in programs within the regular curricula or within continuing education programs. Opinions were solicited regarding the institutional position regarding the extension of education to the elderly and regarding the perceived adequacy of the institutions with respect to current resources for serving the elderly.

The questionnaire was mailed to 75 institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth of Virginia and to a ten percent randomly selected

sample of representative institutions in West Virginia and Tennessee. Sixty-seven of the 75 institutions, or 87.33 percent responded, 44 in Virginia, 12 in West Virginia and 11 in Tennessee. The questionnaire was addressed to the president of each of the institutions. In many cases the president passed the instrument on to the administrator considered most qualified to respond (See Appendix C). In many cases it is not clear who the person making the responses had been, so that there is no uniformity as to which college official is the respondent.

The instrument was pilot tested for ambiguity using graduate students in education at VPI & SU.

The data was examined using the BMDO3D (Health Sciences Computing Facility, UCLA) alphanumeric frequency count, and using the BMDO3D to examine correlations between relevant items.

Much of the data was examined without the use of computer facilities since the open-ended nature of many of the items did not submit well to computerization.

TABLE 1

INSTITUTIONAL DATA

Type of Institution	VA	WVA and TENN	TOTAL
Community College	16	2	18
Junior College	4	1	5
Four-Year Institution (College) .	17	12	29
Four-Year Institution (University)	6	7	13
Other	1	1	2
	44	23	67
Public 46			
Private 21			
Size of Student Body			
Under 1000 22			
1000 - 4999 34			
5000 - 9999 7			
10,000 - 14,999 3			
Over 15,000 1			
Location			
Virginia 44			
West Virginia 12			
Tennessee 11			

Discussion of Findings

An examination of Table 2 reveals that, for the most part, it can be considered that the needs of the elderly segment of the population are largely being ignored at present by the academic communities of Virginia and her neighboring states of West Virginia and Tennessee. Except in the case of universities, there was a considerably more negative response to the question about current programs for the elderly. When all respondents were considered together, the tendency not to have programs for the elderly was pronounced, in that 75 percent of the post-secondary institutions reported no current programs. The picture in terms of service to the elderly outside of the regular curricula appears to be a bit brighter, in that, especially at the Community College level in Virginia there appears to be an effort being made to meet the needs of the aging. Eighty-one percent of the Community Colleges reporting in Virginia stated that they were providing either "much" or "some" service to the elderly. Virginia's universities also reported higher than 50 percent in the top two categories, the actual value being 67 percent. In all other cases, however, the institutions involved reported more than 50 percent in the lower two choices "little" or "none".

TABLE 2

DATA CONCERNING CURRENT PROGRAMS TO SERVE THE ELDERLY

Institution	Program Availability	Virginia	West Virginia and Tennessee
Community Colleges (n=18)		(n=16)	(n=2)
	Yes	4(25%)	0 -
	No	12(75%)	2(100%)
Junior Colleges (n= 5)		(n= 4)	(n= 1)
	Yes	1(25%)	0 -
	No	3(75%)	1(100%)
Universities (n=13)		(n= 6)	(n= 7)
	Yes	3(50%)	3(43%)
	No	3(50%)	4(57%)
Four-Year Colleges (n=29)		(n=17)	(n=12)
	Yes	3(18%)	2(17%)
	No	18(82%)	10(83%)
*Others (n= 2)	Yes	0 -	1(100%)
	No	1(100%)	0 -
(*Both institutions indicating as other were reported to be Graduate Schools)		Summary	
	Yes		17(25%)
	No		50(75%)

TABLE 3

SERVICES TO ELDERLY OUTSIDE REGULAR CURRICULUM

Institution	External Services	Virginia	West Virginia and Tennessee
Community Colleges (n=18)	Much	4(25%)	0 -
	Some	9(56%)	2(100%)
	Little	2(13%)	0 -
	None	1(6%)	0 -
Junior Colleges (n= 5)	Much	1(25%)	0 -
	Some	1(25%)	0 -
	Little	1(25%)	0 -
	None	1(25%)	1(100%)
Four-Year Colleges (n=29)	Much	2(12%)	2(17%)
	Some	1(6%)	2(17%)
	Little	7(41%)	4(33%)
	None	7(41%)	4(33%)
Universities (n=13)	Much	1(17%)	0 -
	Some	3(50%)	3(43%)
	Little	2(33%)	3(43%)
	None	0 -	1(14%)
*Others (n= 2)	Much	0 -	0 -
	Some	0 -	1(100%)
	Little	0 -	0 -
	None	1(100%)	0 -
(*Reported to be Graduate Schools)		Summary	
	M=Much		10(14.9%)
	S=Some		22(32.8%)
	L=Little		20(29.9%)
	N=None		15(22.4%)

TABLE 4

PROGRAMS FOR TRAINING PROFESSIONALS OR PARA-PROFESSIONALS TO WORK WITH ELDERLY

Institution	Program Availability	Virginia	West Virginia and Tennessee
Community Colleges (n=18)	Yes	2(12.50%)	0 -
	No	13(81.25%)	2(100%)
	Unsure	1(6.25%)	0 -
Junior Colleges (n= 5)	Yes	2(50.00%)	0 -
	No	2(50.00%)	1(100%)
	Unsure	0 -	0 -
Four-Year Colleges (n=29)	Yes	3(18.00%)	5(42%)
	No	12(71.00%)	7(58%)
	Unsure	2(11.00%)	0 -
Universities (n=13)	Yes	1(16.70%)	2(43%)
	No	3(50.00%)	4(57%)
	Unsure	2(13.30%)	0 -
*Others (n= 2)	Yes	0 -	1(100%)
	No	1(100.00%)	0 -
	Unsure	0 -	0 -
(n=63) 4 respondents omitted this item)		Summary	
		Yes	20(32%)
*(Reported by Graduate Schools)		No	43(68%)
		Unsure	0 -

TABLE 5

OFFERINGS IN RETIREMENT OR PRE-RETIREMENT EDUCATION

Institution	Offerings	Virginia	West Virginia and Tennessee
Community Colleges (n=18)	Yes	3(18.75%)	1(50%)
	No	13(81.25%)	1(50%)
	Unsure	0 -	0 -
Junior Colleges (n= 5)	Yes	3(75.00%)	0 -
	No	1(25.00%)	1(100%)
	Unsure	0 -	0 -
Four-Year Colleges (n=29)	Yes	1(6.00%)	(8%)
	No	16(94.00%)	11(92%)
	Unsure	0 -	0 -
Universities (n=13)	Yes	2(33.00%)	2(29%)
	No	4(67.00%)	5(71%)
	Unsure	0 -	0 -
*Others (n= 2)	Yes	0 -	0 -
	No	1(100.00%)	1(100%)
	Unsure	0 -	0 -
*(Reported to be Graduate Schools)		Summary	
		Yes	13(20%)
		No	54(80%)
		Unsure	0(0%)

TABLE 6

RANK OF SERVING ELDERLY IN PROGRAM PRIORITIES OF INSTITUTION

Institution	Rank	Virginia	West Virginia and Tennessee
Community Colleges (n=18)	Top 25%	5(31%)	0 -
	Middle 50%	6(38%)	0 -
	Lowest 25%	5(31%)	2(100%)
Junior Colleges (n= 5)	Top 25%	0 -	0 -
	Middle 50%	1(25%)	1(100%)
	Lowest 25%	3(75%)	0 -
Four-Year Colleges (n=29)	Top 25%	0 -	2(17%)
	Middle 50%	5(29%)	2(17%)
	Lowest 25%	12(71%)	6(50%)
Universities (n=13)	Top 25%	0 -	0 -
	Middle 50%	3(50%)	1(14.2%)
	Lowest 25%	3(50%)	6(85.8%)
*Others (n= 2)	Top 25%	0 -	0 -
	Middle 50%	0 -	0 -
	Lowest 25%	1(100%)	1(100%)

(n=64) 3 respondents omitted this item)

*(Reported to be Graduate Schools)

Summary

Top	7(11%)
Middle	20(31%)
Lowest	37(58%)

In addition to being asked to rate themselves on the amount of service outside the regular curriculum which was being provided to the elderly, the institutions were asked to list some of the activities which were being engaged in which were of such service and to state which were the best of these activities (See item 6, Appendix B). Among those reported were: Seminars for senior citizens re: consumer information and availability of special rights for senior citizens; Field instruction in services to the aging; Continuing education for workers in aging programs; Service Referral Center; Fundamentals of Investments; Citizens Participation in Urban Redevelopment; Workshop to explore needs and desires of senior adults; Introducing concept of aging in psychology, sociology and health classes to all age students; working with Directors of Senior Citizens; working with national AARP staff to develop an "Emeritus College"; Workshop for foster grandparents;

Arts and Crafts programs, courses on caring for the geriatric patient; Initiating an interdisciplinary program in aging; Nutrition for the Aging Project; Working with the community on awareness of needs of aged persons; Non-credit course in Living Alone; symposium on Aging in the Modern World; Symposium on Laws and the Elderly. The preceding list of activities would seem to indicate that those institutions which are active in working to meet the needs of the elderly are doing so in a broad spectrum of activities.

In view of the reported need for trained workers in the field of gerontology (Montgomery, 1973) it is disheartening to notice that, as can be seen in Table 4, very little effort is being made by institutions of higher education to train the needed professional and para-professional cadre. Overall, the institutions reported 68.3 percent were including no programs designed to train workers to deal with the problems of the elderly.

Nothing much appears to be happening in the higher educational institutions with respect to training persons for retirement. Table 5 reveals that 80.6 percent of the institutions reporting have no current program for retirement or pre-retirement education. Junior colleges in Virginia present the only exception to this in that 75 percent of those reporting showed current programs in such training.

None of the above is too surprising when Table 6 is examined. Apparently service to the elderly occupies a very low rank in the current priorities of institutions of higher education in these three Southeastern states. Fifty-seven percent place service to the elderly in the lowest 25 percent of the institutional hierarchy of priorities. Once again, however, when the situation in the Community Colleges in Virginia is viewed, it can be seen that they have reported 69 percent in the highest and middle priorities, being the only type of institution so reporting.

TABLE 7

DATA CONCERNING ATTITUDES TOWARD
SENIOR CITIZENS HIGHER EDUCATION ACT OF 1974
(RESPONSE REQUESTED FROM VIRGINIA RESPONDENTS ONLY)

A. Opinion Regarding Extension of Current Legislation (Re: Higher Education for the Elderly):

TO:	INSTITUTIONS ASSENTING
1. Over 60 Regardless of Income	14(30.4%)
2. Over 65 Regardless of Income	14(30.4%)
3. Private Institutions On A State Subsidy Basis	15(32.6%)
4. Private Institutions On A Sharing Basis	5(10.9%)
5. Private Institutions At Expense Of Institution	3(6.5%)

B. Opinion Regarding Adequacy of Current Resources To Respond Immediately To Legislation For Elderly In Virginia

ADEQUATE	21(47.7%)
INADEQUATE	16(36.4%)
OMITTED	7(15.9%)

It might be of interest to examine the responses to item seven on the questionnaire: "Do you believe more should be done at your institution with respect to serving the elderly?" Of the 58 respondents who reacted to that item, 54 answered yes. This provides an indeed interesting contrast between what the academic community (or at least, that part of the academic community represented by this survey) believes it should be doing and what

is actually going on at the institutions in question. The attitude mentioned was reflected also by some of the unsolicited remarks appended to the answers to some of the items; remarks such as, "We should be doing more!", "We have submitted a proposal for a 2-year degree in Human Service with option in Gerontology . . ."

As reported in Table 7, the proportion of institutions favoring the extension of current legislation (Senior Citizens Higher Education Act of 1974, which provides free tuition on a space-available basis for citizens over 65 with incomes under $5000) to a broader spectrum of the elderly population is less than 50 percent for every suggested extension of the benefits. It is interesting to note that, by a small amount, the option suggesting extension of the educational benefits to private institutions on a state subsidy basis led the others in number of times chosen as a plausible choice. Of the 21 private institutions responding to the questionnaire, 15 were located in Virginia. Of these 15, eight favored extension of education for elderly to private institutions on a state subsidized basis, three favored such extesnion on a sharing basis, whereas none reported the opinion that the private institutions should undertake such a program at their own expense. This may reflect the financial pinch which private institutions are feeling currently as much or perhaps more than it reflects the private institutions' attitudes toward serving the elderly.

Part B of Table 7 requested the opinion of the Virginia institutions regarding the adequacy of their resources to respond immediately to legislation of education for the elderly in Virginia. Only 37 of the 44 institutions in Virginia responded to this item. Forty-seven percent considered their facilities adequate, 36 percent considered facilities inadequate, and

a surprising 16 percent were not aware enough of the readiness of their institutions to meet the challenge of the new legislation to commit themselves to a response, this despite the fact that the Senior Citizens Higher Education Act became effective July 1, 1974, and was made known to the academic community several months prior to its effective date. This would seem to indicate a sluggishness on the part of some Virginia institutions to shoulder an adequate part of the composite load which the legislation has placed on these institutions for the education of the ever-increasing aging population in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

TABLE 8

DATA CONCERNING PLANS FOR FUTURE
PROGRAM EXPANSION OF COURSE OFFERINGS
FOR ELDERLY WITHIN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

Institution	Expansion Plans	Virginia	West Virginia and Tennessee
Community Colleges (n=18)	Yes	16(100%)	1(50%)
	No	0 -	0 -
	Unsure	0 -	1(50%)
Junior Colleges (n= 5)	Yes	22(50%)	1(100%)
	No	1(25%)	0 -
	Unsure	1(25%)	0 -
Four-Year Colleges (n=29)	Yes	6(35%)	5(42%)
	No	7(41%)	2(16%)
	Unsure	4(24%)	5(42%)
Universities (n=13)	Yes	4(67%)	3(43%)
	No	0 -	3(43%)
	Unsure	2(33%)	1(14%)
*Others (n= 2)	Yes	0 -	1(100%)
	No	1(100%)	0 -
	Unsure	0 -	0 -

*(Reported to be Graduate Schools)

TABLE 9

PROPOSED PROGRAMS TO TRAIN GERONTOLOGY WORKERS WITHIN NEXT FIVE YEARS

Institution	Training Plans	Virginia	West Virginia and Tennessee
Community Colleges (n=18)	Yes	7(43.75%)	1(50.00%)
	No	6(37.50%)	1(50.00%)
	Unsure	3(18.75%)	0 -
Junior Colleges (n= 5)	Yes	2(50.00%)	1(100.0%)
	No	1(25.00%)	0 -
	Unsure	1(25.00%)	0 -
Four-Year Colleges (n=29)	Yes	2(12.00%)	4(33.30%)
	No	13(76.00%)	5(41.70%)
	Unsure	2(12.00%)	3(25.00%)
Universities (n=13)	Yes	1(17.00%)	2(28.60%)
	No	2(33.00%)	4(57.10%)
	Unsure	3(50.00%)	1(14.30%)
*Others (n= 2)	Yes	0 -	1(100.0%)
	No	1(100.0%)	0 -
	Unsure	0 -	0 -

*(Reported to be Graduate Schools)

The data reported in Table 8 concerning plans for future activities in the area of aging by the surveyed institutions seems to indicate that there is a willingness to become active in the field, especially at the Community College level. The four-year colleges do not appear to be ready to plan for expansion of their programs to meet the needs of the elderly. However, in the field of training gerontology workers, it is apparent that very few of the institutions appear ready to accept the challenge presented by the almost critical need for trained personnel to work with the aging segment of the population.

When asked in items 16 and 17 of the questionnaire, to report the percentages of the over 65 student population in the regular curriculum and in continuing education programs, it is clear that the respondents did not for the most part understand the intent of the items. The responses indicated that the respondents were replying as to what part of the student population in regular and continuing education was over 65, and such responses as five percent and less than one percent were given. In many cases, however, the institutions reported that the information was either unknown or not recorded by the institution, especially for continuing education programs. Item 18, which asked what percent of the student enrollment is made up of persons 65 or older listed responses varying from none to a high of 10 percent. However, most of the responses were either one percent or two percent at most. The average response of the thirty institutions giving numerical answers was 1.3 percent.

Item 13 (See Appendix B), asked the respondents to report any difficulties encountered in unsuccessful attempts to initiate programs for the elderly. Fifty-five institutions either omitted the item entirely, or marked it not applicable. Unfortunately it is not understood whether the institutions have not attempted to initiate programs, or whether there have been no problems encountered. Considering the data revealed in Table 2, the former presents the more likely possibility. Of the 12 institutions choosing to respond to the item, five were community colleges in Virginia, two were four-year colleges in Virginia, and one each of community colleges in Tennessee, junior colleges in Virginia, universities in Tennessee and West Virginia, and four-year colleges in Tennessee. The responses fell into several categories, with several institutions reporting multiple

problems:

1. Lack of interest (5)
2. Funding (4)
3. Personnel and resources (2)
4. Time to develop programs (1)
5. Jealousy of community agencies (1)
6. Transportation (1)
7. Recruitment (1)

Federal legislation provides that each state have an office within the state to administer the Older Americans Act. In Virginia the State Office on Aging fulfills this responsibility. The respondents were asked, in item 8, to delineate the ways in which they felt the State Office on Aging, or the corresponding agency in other states could be most helpful to the institutions in their efforts to develop programs designed to serve the elderly. Fifty-two institutions reported that the State Office on Aging could help by providing additional resources, 37 looked for help in the provision of faculty inservice education, 39 asked that release time to faculty and staff for program development for the elderly be provided. In addition 34 of the institutions gave top priority to the provision of additional resources to the institution by the State Office on Aging. Free responses to this item listed such desired areas of assistance as: coordinated programming; provision of leadership and guidance; exchange of information about successful programs; resources for transportation of the elderly; resources for recruitment and counseling the elderly; make available funds for scholarships to assisted qualified students, undergraduate and graduate, in becoming professionals or para-professionals; Adult Education; proposal writing; provide state leadership to encourage

institutions to enter this area more effectively. Some of the free responses appear to fit the given categories, however, if the respondents felt sufficiently motivated to add items of roughly the same nature as the choice categories it appeared that additional emphasis was placed on the areas mentioned, above and beyond that which is represented by checking a response item on a questionnaire.

Some interesting correlations between items appeared. These were not reported to suggest statistical significance, but rather to merely record their occurrence. (For the information of the reader, the critical values of the Pearson Correlation-Coefficient at n=60, two-tailed test, for α.05=.250, for α.01=.325)*. Between size of institution and current programs for the elderly the correlation reported was -.450, which would seem to indicate that the larger institutions tend to be doing less in the area of current programs for the elderly. A correlation of .558 would seem to indicate that those institutions who are providing programs within the regular curriculum are also providing more services outside the curriculum. Institutions which are providing programs within the regular curriculum and those which are serving outside the curriculum appear also to be those who are likely to have retirement or pre-retirement programs, with correlations of .408 and .447 reported. Correlations within the range of .413 to .50[illegible] emerge between items indicating those institutions who place a high priority on the State Office on Aging providing release time for faculty inservice training and those institutions favoring extension of legislation for education for the elderly to a larger segment of the aging population.

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*R. A. Fisher and F. Yates STATISTICAL TABLES FOR BIOLOGICAL, AGRICULTURAL AND MEDICAL RESEARCH, in Ferguson, George A. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS IN PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Problem

The purpose of this study was four-fold: First, to determine the current status of program offerings for the aging in selected institutions of higher education. Second, to ascertain, if any, programs for the aging designed to train personnel to work with the aging. Third, to determine what plans for future programs were being made by institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and fourth, to determine the extent of existing attitudes and priorities of those institutions with regard to such programs.

Procedure

A combination "open-end, closed-form" survey questionnaire was mailed to all institutions of higher education in Virginia and to a representative sample of such institutions in the neighboring states of West Virginia and Tennessee.

Summary of Findings

When all responding institutions were viewed collectively, the tendency not to have programs for the elderly was pronounced, in that almost 75 percent of the post-secondary institutions reported no current programs.

Eighty-one percent of the community colleges reporting in Virginia stated that they were providing either "much" or "some" service to the elderly.

Some of the activities responding institutions reported some involvement relative to serving the aging including seminars for senior citizens; field instruction in-services to the aging; service referral center; working with directors of senior citizens; workshop for foster grandparents; symposia including such areas for the elderly as law, nutrition, living alone, and the modern world; courses on caring for the geriatric patient; initiating an interdisciplinary and introducing the concept of age in psychology, sociology and health classes to all age students.

Very little effort is being made by institutions of higher education to train the needed professional and para-professional cadre. It was found that slightly over 68 percent were including no programs designed to train workers to deal with problems of the elderly.

Almost eighty-one percent of the institutions reporting had no current program for retirement or pre-retirement education. Fifty-seven percent of the institutions ranked service to the elderly in the lowest 25 percent of the institutional hierarchy of priorities; however, 69 percent of the community colleges in Virginia reported this among the highest and middle priorities.

Ninety percent of the respondents reported that more should be done at their particular institutions with respect to serving the elderly.

Of the 21 private institutions responding to the questionnaire, 15 were in Virginia. On the question of extending current legislation,

more than 85 percent suggested extension of educational benefits to private institutions on a state subsidy basis or on a shared basis.

Virginia's institutions of higher education were asked to report the adequacy of their resources to respond immediately to the 1974 Senior Citizen Higher Education legislation which provides education for the elderly (over 65 and income under $5000). Forty-seven percent considered their facilities adequate, 37 percent considered facilities inadequate and 16 percent were not really sure about the readiness of institutions in meeting the challenge of the new legislation.

Less than two percent of the total student populations of reporting institutions is comprised of persons 65 and over. A slightly larger percent of elderly persons were found to be enrolled in continuing education programs.

Fifty-five of the institutions responding failed to respond to the questionnaire item relative to difficulties encountered by institutions of higher education in unsuccessful attempts to initiate aging programs. Of the institutions which reported, the most frequent difficulties were lack of interest, funding and personnel/resources.

Fifty-two institutions reported that the State Office on Aging could assist institutions in their efforts to develop programs designed to serve the elderly. This included providing additional resources, providing faculty in-service education, exchange of information about successful programs, and provide state leadership to encourage institutions to enter this area most effectively.

Correlation between size of institution and current programs for the elderly was .450; also a .558 correlation was found between those institutions providing programs within the regular curriculum and those

same institutions providing more services outside the curriculum. Somewhat high correlations were also found between those institutions placing high priority on the State Office on Aging providing release time for faculty in-service training and those institutions favoring extension of legislation for education of the elderly.

Conclusions

On the basis of the study, the following generalizations are made about institutions of higher education providing education for the elderly:

1. Generally, it appears that, at the present time, institutions of higher education in Virginia are not involved to any large degree in programs related to education for or about the aging.

2. It does appear that a large number of institutions have plans for instituting educational programs for elderly persons within the next five years.

3. It appears, with a few notable exceptions, for the most part, it is the Community Colleges who are conducting and planning programs which involve education of and service to the elderly. A point of encouragement lies in the fact that the preponderance of institutions reporting felt that they should be doing more in the area of aging. It can be conjectured that perhaps nationwide attention to the "graying of America" and the problems and needs of the aging has come about a bit too rapidly for slow-moving institutions to adapt to.

4. Junior Colleges, on the average, in comparison with reporting institutions of higher education have the greater number of on-going pre-retirement or retirement education programs.

5. There appeared to be some evidence of an apathetic attitude on the part of some reporting Virginia institutions to shoulder an adequate share of the composite responsibility which the legislation has placed on these institutions for the education of the ever-increasing aging population in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

6. A very small percentage of the reporting institutions' student body consists of persons 65 years and over.

7. On the matter of difficulties encountered by institutions of higher education in initiating programs for the elderly persons, many institutions omitted the item or simply report that the item was not applicable; thus, this made it somewhat

difficult to conclude whether responding institutions have not attempted to initiate programs, or whether there have been no problems of major proportion, encountered. The former is the more likely conclusion to draw.

8. The State Office on Aging in Virginia (and the comparable agencies in West Virginia and Tennessee) were viewed by responding institutions as having the leadership capacity to assist them in getting involved in the area of education for the aging.

9. Those institutions providing educational programs for aging within the regular university or college curriculum are also providing more aging services outside the curriculum

Recommendations

A. The following recommendations are made on the basis of the findings in the study:

1. It is suggested that a follow-up study be conducted within the next few years or certainly a reasonable amount of time to see, if indeed, there has been an increase in educational programs and services or to the impact of the Senior Citizens Higher Education Act, or both in Virginia.

2. It will indeed be enlightening to see whether colleges and universities are able to respond to a changing society or whether they will continue their "Kiddie Kick" or large-scale youth orientation to the detriment of the older adult segment of the population.

B. The following recommendations are made for the purpose of providing ideas and/or suggestions to institutions of higher education in initiating educational programs/services for the aging:

1. These institutions could as a standard practice admit and encourage older persons to attend regular credit classes where these will satisfy their needs. These students could be enrolled in non-degree programs. They do not need to meet the usual entrance requirements or course prerequisites, and they could be given specialized counseling.

2. They could grant free or lowered tuition to older adults as is done by a number of institutions including Boston University, University of Kentucky, Antioch College and the University of Akron. There is good news here for the senior citizens of Virginia. The Senior Citizens Higher Education Act which

allows Virginia residents 65 years of age or older to attend state supported colleges and universities free of charge went into effect July 1, 1974.

3. They could design their non-credit courses or programs with more appeal. Such courses, for example, could be designed for persons who are approaching retirement and for those already in retirement (Pre-retirement Education and/or Retirement Education). Example, Project AFTER (Alternatives for Those Entering Retirement) being conducted by Mercy College, Dobbs Ferry, New York.

4. They could support seminars, conferences, symposiums and workshops in the field of aging, including the conduct of conferences and other meetings for the purposes of facilitating exchange of information and stimulating new approaches for improving services to the aging.

5. They could offer special seminars on topics of interest to older persons. The University of Akron has had excellent success with a series entitled, "An Afternoon at the University." Monthly sessions cover a wide range of topics, some of general interest and others concerned with sex and similar series entitled, "Making the Most of Maturity." At Akron University persons aged 60 years or over are granted special tuition rates and simplified enrollment procedures.

6. They could provide and improve programs for preparing personnel for careers in the field of aging, including design, development and evaluation of exemplary training programs, introduction of high quality and more effective curricula and curricular materials.

7. They could furnish staff members as resource persons to Senior Citizens' Centers, recreational organizations, and other agencies interested in establishing or improving educational programs for older persons.

8. They could include more often than they do subject matter of interest and value to older persons in their educational programs for older persons.

9. They could include more often than they do subject matter of interest and value to older persons in their educational broadcasting. A good example is the series of 20 programs sponsored by The State University of New York entitled "Living for the Sixties." It was first used in 1966 on TV Station WPSX in University Park, Pennsylvania, and later on many stations across the nation. It dealt with such diverse needs as health, legislation for the aging, meals and diet planning, and social security benefits. Also, what about a "sesame street" for the elderly.

10. They could take a leadership role in providing instruction about the process of aging in our schools and universities so both children and youth may become more aware of the needs and problems associated with the aging and the aged.

11. They could help young adults understand better these needs and problems, so they can help plan more wisely for their later years.

12. They could call attention to and deal with the neglected second half of developmental psychology, which offers clues for education at all levels to assure social participation and personal preservation of the aged.

13. Finally, institutions of higher education could expand efforts to include courses and sections of courses on the problems of growing old and the needs and potentials of elderly people. In the words of James Birren, "our colleges and universities are still on a kiddie-kick." The emphasis is still on child development, early childhood education, adolescent psychology, preparation for marriage, and WHAM that is where it usually ends. Such deficiencies must be rectified if the general attitude of the U.S. citizenry is to change toward the elderly - they must be educated. This effort must also be directed to the high schools of America as well.

There are similar ways in which colleges and universities could serve older adults without altering their administrative structure or too greatly overburdening their staff. However, if they would be more aggressive and more experimental in the kinds of activities we have suggested, we believe their experiences would point the way to the broader range of services which are needed and which would be embraced by our older Americans.

It must be pointed out that colleges and universities are not expected to do the whole job. There are many educational, occupational and recreational services which can perfectly well be performed by local governmental agencies, church groups, Senior Citizens' Centers and labor unions. And some older persons will <u>not</u> want to participate in educational activities. They will be like the old lady at the conference on aging who said she didn't want to be taught how to play games or be

taught to square dance. She just wanted a small place of her own where she could cook a light meal and brew a cup of tea and then to be left alone. This simple formula for living would fit a number of older persons, but it is certainly not appropriate for that large number who retire in full physical and mental vigor at 60 or 65 and who have another twenty or thirty years to live. Of this latter group the top 10 or 15 percent in educational attainment should be a particular charge for our colleges and universities, as these are the ones who are primarily college graduates. This population segment contains a significant amount of the recent educational, professional, industrial, and business leadership of our communities; and colleges and universities are the educational agencies uniquely equipped to save the hard-won skills, knowledge and insights of these leaders from becoming suddenly obsolete at age sixty-five and provide the opportunity for that segment of the aging population who never had the chance to matriculate in an institution at all.

APPENDIX

A. Cover Letter

B. Survey Instrument

C. Copies of Letters Received from Respondents

Appendix A

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL EDUCATION

August 6, 1974

Dear _____:

Your help is urgently needed.

Your institution has been randomly chosen to participate in a Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University research project.

This project is aimed at determining, via survey questionnaire, the role that colleges and universities (including two-year colleges) should play in serving the elderly. The specific objectives of this study will be three-fold. (1) To determine the extent of colleges and universities present involvement in the field of aging or gerontology, (2) to determine the nature of and extent of anticipated future involvements in the field of aging and (3) to develop program guidelines for use by the colleges and by local, state and federal agencies in expanding the involvement of college and university resources.

Please consider for a moment the following facts:

The percentage of Americans living past 65 has multiplied six and one-half times during our lifetime. Today there are 8 million Americans past 75 years of age. One million are past 85, and the U.S. Census Bureau counts 106,000 Americans who have lived more than 100 years. Many medical experts project that within this century, within the next 30 years, the normal life span for Americans may increase to between 105 and 110 years. Since 1900 the average life expectancy has been lengthened by 30 years.

To put this another way, there has been a graying of America and there will soon be a graying of our schools, colleges and universities as more older adults take courses or pursue degree programs. Are we ready to give a life-span orientation to education for middle-aged and retired persons? The professional education system in administration, research, and teacher training has traditionally accepted responsibility only for the education of youth, although educational institutions clearly have a responsibility to serve all. What should be the role of your institution? What are you now doing? What are some of your anticipated or future goals for serving the elderly?

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL EDUCATION

All you need do to render this very worthwhile contribution to education is complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me promptly in the enclosed self-addressed and stamped envelope. Won't you please take 15-20 minutes now and provide the information needed and return the form in today's mail?

Thank you for this very important contribution. You may be assured that after the data are transferred to computer cards, this questionnaire will be destroyed and your anonymity will be guaranteed.

Sincerely,

N. Alan Sheppard, Ph.D.
Project Director

Appendix 5

VPI and SU
College of Education
2119C Derring Hall Blacksburg, Virginia

Research August 1974

SURVEY OF THE ROLE AND STATUS OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN THE EDUCATION OF THE AGED

Directions: Please respond to the following questions in terms of your institution's position, experience and judgment. In the reporting of the data no reference will be made to your institution. (The term elderly aging or aged in the context of this study refers to persons 65 years of age and over)

1. Type of institution: (please check appropriate blank)

   a. _____ Community college
   b. _____ Junior college
   c. _____ Four year institution (college)
   d. _____ Four year institution (university)
   e. _____ Other _____
      please specify

2. Is the institution of higher education public or private? (please check appropriate option)

   a. _____ Public
   b. _____ Private

3. Size of student body is: (please check appropriate option)

   a. _____ Under 1 000
   b. _____ 1 000 4 999
   c. _____ 5,000-9 999
   d. _____ 10,000 14 999
   e. _____ over 15,000

4. Location: _____
      specify state

5. Is your institution currently providing any program(s) specifically designed to meet the needs of elderly persons within the regular curriculum? YES _____
   NO _____ UNSURE _____

6. What contributions outside the regular curriculum, are you making at your institution to meet the needs of the elderly? (please check appropriate option)
   MUCH _____ SOME _____ LITTLE _____ NONE _____

   List some of the activities you are engaged in that are directed toward the elderly. _____

   List a couple of the best things you feel you're doing. _____

7. Do you believe more should be done at your institution with respect to serving the elderly? (please check appropriate option) YES___ NO___ UNSURE___
Comments _____

_____

8 How could the State Office on Aging help if you feel more should be done? (Depending on the State, there may be another name for State Office on Aging such as Commission on Aging, Council on Aging, etc.)
Please check: Then by using a number in each blank on the right, rank those which you have checked in order of importance (e.g., 1 = most important, 2 = next most important, etc.)

a. ____ Provide additional resources _____
b. ____ Provide faculty inservice education _____
c. ____ Give release time to faculty and staff for program development for the elderly _____
d. ____ Others _____
e. _____ _____ _____ _____
f. _____ _____ _____ _____

9. How would you rank serving the elderly among the program priorities for your institution? (please check appropriate option)

_____ Top 25 percent
_____ Middle range (25-75 percent)
_____ Lower (0-25%)

10. Does your institution offer any retirement education or pre-retirement education programs?
YES _____ NO _____ UNSURE _____
Comments _____

_____

11. Are there plans for course offerings designed to meet the needs of elderly people to be increased in the overall offerings of the institution within the next 5 years?
YES _____ NO _____ UNSURE _____
If yes, will courses primarily be offered in (please check appropriate option)
a. _____ regular curriculum
b. _____ continuing education curriculum
c. _____ other _____
please specify

12. Does your institution sponsor programs designed to train professionals or paraprofessionals to work with the elderly? (please check appropriate option)
YES _____ NO _____ UNSURE _____
Comments _____

_____

_____ _____

13. If you have attempted to initiate programs for the elderly and have not succeeded--please state source of difficulty. What obstacles stood in the way of implementation? _____

_____

_____

_____ _____

14. Are there any programs proposed to train gerontology workers within the next 5 years?
YES _____ NO _____ UNSURE _____

15. If yes, will such training efforts be provided through:

a. _____ Regular curriculum
b. _____ Continuing education
c. _____ Specialized training programs
d. _____ Other _____
please specify

THIS SECTION IS FOR INSTITUTIONS IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA ONLY

The Commonwealth of Virginia legislatively now provides (over 65, annual income under $5,000) free tuition at state supported institutions on a space available basis. This legislation known as the Senior Citizen Higher Education Act became effective July 1, 1974.

16. What percent of your students over 65 is currently enrolled in the regular curriculum? _____
Comments _____

17. What percent of your students over 65 is enrolled in continuing education programs? _____
Comments _____

18. Approximately what percent of your student enrollment is made up of persons 65 years of age or older? _____
Comments _____

19. Is it the opinion of your institution that such education should be extended to:

a. _____ over 60 regardless of income f. _____ other
b. _____ over 65 regardless of income
c. _____ private institutions on State subsidy basis
d. _____ private institutions on sharing basis
e. _____ private institution at expense of institution

20. How adequate are your resources--staff space and programs--in enabling your institution to respond immediately to this new legislation of education for the elderly in Virginia?
Comments _____

21. List other program priorities in Virginia which you feel supersede efforts toward serving the elderly.

a. _____ d. _____
b. _____ e. _____
c. _____ f. _____

Return by September 6, 1974 to: Dr. N. Alan Sheppard
College of Education
2119C Derring Hall, VPI&SU
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

Appendix C

MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38152

Information Systems and Analysis

August 27, 1974

Dr. N. Alan Sheppard
College of Education
2119C Derring Hall, VPI & SU
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

Dear Dr. Sheppard:

On March 27, 1974 the Governor of Tennessee signed a bill permitting persons who are legal residents of this state and have attained the age of 60 to audit any credit courses offered by the state university system at no charge. This program is now in effect at Memphis State with Ms. Novalyn Smothers as program director.

The only condition that is applied to admission to the classes is that participants are admitted on a space available basis after tuition paying students have enrolled.

The University also supplies those participating in the program with audit transcripts, I.D. cards and parking decals at no cost.

There are approximately 18 senior citizens enrolled in the tuition free program for the 1974 second summer term and a substantial increase is expected in the fall. The program is working smoothly and no critical problems are foreseen.

The Division of Continuing Studies at Memphis State University sponsors a program by which persons who are retired and have reached the age of 65 may enroll in certain courses offered by the Division at a reduced fee. Approximately 25 to 30 such courses are offered per semester and cover a wide range of special interest fields.

Two members of the Division faculty sit on a committee which sponsors the Memphis Long Life Team which prepares lecture series, special interest and community action programs for senior citizens.

Please inform us if we may be of further service.

Sincerely,

Michael Armour
Research Associate

Tennessee State University

Nashville, Tennessee 37203

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

September 3, 1974

Dr. Alan Sheppard
Project Director
Division of Vocational-Technical Education
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

Dear Dr. Sheppard:

Enclosed is the information which was requested in your letter of August 6, 1974.

Best wishes and kind regards.

Very truly yours,

A. P. Torrence

A. P. Torrence
President

cc: Mr. Rex Butler

SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
RICHLANDS, VIRGINIA 24641, TELEPHONE (703) 964-4028
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

August 29, 1974

Dr. Alan Sheppard
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State
University
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

Dear Doctor Sheppard:

There is certainly a need in our service area to expand programs specifically for meeting the needs of the elderly. Virginia has taken a positive step forward with recent legislation to offer tuition free education to the low income elderly.

The initial step toward providing programs for the elderly in the Southwest Virginia Community College service area has been taken through the formulation of an advisory committee. This committee will advise the institution on program development and will consist of representation primarily from the group to be served. Although we have provided some programs for the elderly, it is readily apparent that much more needs to be done.

Please direct further correspondence on this matter to Frank Horton, Community Services Planner at Southwest Virginia Community College, who has completed the attached questionnaire for the College.

If we can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to call upon us.

Sincerely yours,

Charles R. King

Charles R. King

CRK: bb

cc: Mr. Frank Horton

CHARTERED 1693
COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY
OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH
WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA 23185

September 6, 1974

Dr. Alan Sheppard
2119 C Derring Hall
VPI & SU
Blacksburg, Virginia 24060

Dear Dr. Sheppard:

President Graves has asked me to respond to your Survey of the Role and Status of Colleges and Universities in the Education of the Aged.

Without some detailed research into what programs the aged want and need, each of us will speculate and come up with our own ideas, I'm sure. But I would assume that the needs and wants of the aged would cover a wide spectrum of topics, would be less concerned with satisfying requirements for a degree than with the satisfaction of acquiring the knowledge from a multitude of subjects. For this reason, I feel the most suitable educational opportunities open to the aged at the College of William and Mary are the programs offered thru our Office of Special Programs.

Special Programs administers a variety of short courses, seminars, institutes, field studies and conferences which entail no credit (except possibly some Continuing Education Units). Hence there are no tests and no grades, and prior approval of the College is not needed to attend a course. Registration is open to all, for one course or as many as the student wishes, and may be accomplished by mail.

Our available statistics for Spring semester of 1974 would appear to support the supposition that the aged are not interested in degree programs; only 3 of the 5431 full or part-time students enrolled in our regular degree program were 65 or over. (These figures presuppose that the student will list his correct age if 65 or older.) But we cannot furnish you with valid figures to prove or disprove the latter part of my supposition -- that the non-credit programs offered thru Special Programs meet the needs of the aged in our area. We have never had any reason to collect data on the age of participants in these courses.

Since one major aim of Special Programs is to make the courses as easily accessible to the student as possible, information necessary to enroll is minimized and consists of name, address and phone number only. At the completion of the course, comments regarding the program and suggestions for future courses are requested. We have not and do not now routinely ask the participants in Special Programs about their age.

In compliance with the Senior Citizens Higher Education Act, all brochures and program announcements now carry notice that students may be admitted to a course free of charge, provided there is room in the class, by signing a form stating that he/she is 65 years of age or older and has been a resident of the state of Virginia for one year or longer. Your survey deadline of September 6, 1974 is too early to reflect any data which might be compiled from registrations under this new regulation. Deadlines for registration differs with each special program, and the latest one is mid-November.

Later in the fall, we may be able to furnish you with more figures relating to aged enrolled under the free tuition provision. But we could not give you figures relating to total number of students enrolled who are 65 or older, because we will not collect data on age unless the student requests free tuition.

If this is a continuing research study and you would like additional information, say in late November after deadlines for enrollment in all Special Programs are past, would you please let me know and we'll furnish you with what data we have at that time.

Sincerely,

Jean C. Keating

Jean C. Keating
Assistant Director

Enclosure.

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